

# INNOVATORS

**FLEETMASTER EXPRESS**  
Roanoke, Va.



# TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Fleetmaster Express invests in the future

BY DEAN SMALLWOOD

**T**here's something to be said about doing the right things for the right people, and Fleetmaster Express appears to be working all angles to take care of both their drivers and their customers by acquiring the latest equipment and technology, and beefing up driver pay to help keep its new investments rolling.

The growing 28-year-old company operates more than 300 trucks and 1,400 trailers and serves customers from 13 terminals, offering over-the-road, local and dedicated hauling, as well as freight brokerage, warehousing and spotting services.

In addition to its base in Roanoke, Va., Fleetmaster also has other Virginia locations in Danville and Williamsburg, as well as terminals in several other states.

## Delivering satisfaction

Nearly two years ago, the company made its initial statement that it was intent on upgrading its fleet. In the last quarter of 2013, it added 40 new tractors.

Last October, Fleetmaster followed up on that previous investment by purchasing an additional 60 new trucks. The company says the equipment investments represented a 10 percent increase in growth and would allow it to hire more drivers and haul more weight up to 50,000 pounds.

Each truck has modern fuel-efficient engines with selective catalytic reduction and fuel-efficient transmissions and rear axles. The trucks also have the latest technologies and real-time connectivity with customer support and come equipped

with an auxiliary power unit to conserve fuel and prevent idling.

The new clean trucks align with Fleetmaster's longtime participation in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's SmartWay Transport Partnership for improving fuel efficiency, reducing greenhouse gases and reducing air pollution from the transportation supply chain industry.

"With the proven reliability and fuel economy of the latest engines, we have enjoyed favorable operating results while furnishing a vehicle that delivers superb driver satisfaction," says Carl Bumgarner, president and chief executive officer.

To improve customer service and enhance its driver satisfaction efforts even further, Fleetmaster also has added 200 new trailers to its current fleet. The fuel-efficient trailers are made from lighter-weight materials and feature wide-base tires with aluminum wheels.

"These lighter-weight trailers will help us service our customers even better by allowing us to haul the maximum weight allowed," says Travis Smith, vice president and chief operating officer. "We are excited to be getting these top-of-the-line trailers to work in tandem with the 100 new trucks. We believe investing in these additions is appreciated by both our customer base and our driving force."

**The company buys new equipment and beefs up its pay package to maximize both customer and driver satisfaction.**



**Fleetmaster Express received the 2014 Guitar Center Carrier of the Year Award. From left: Charlie Rife, Midwest Region manager; Carl Bumgarner, president and CEO; and Travis Smith, vice president and COO.**

cess story for Fleetmaster. In 2013, the company was a Division III (15-24.99 million miles) winner in the Truckload Carriers Association's National Fleet Safety Awards. Its recognition was based on accident frequency per million miles driven.

Fleetmaster's commitment to technology played no small part in its safety recognition, and the company also has expanded that commitment to other facets of its operations. It recently acquired new trailer tracking and logistics planning software to provide added operational enhancements and strengthen its customer relationships.

"This will allow us to improve efficiencies and address possible business model changes that improve efficiencies on both sides," Smith said. "Our goals with these systems are to create efficiencies and improve the current flow of information, making things easier for both the customer and Fleetmaster, as well as giving us information to make data-based decisions for business improvement."

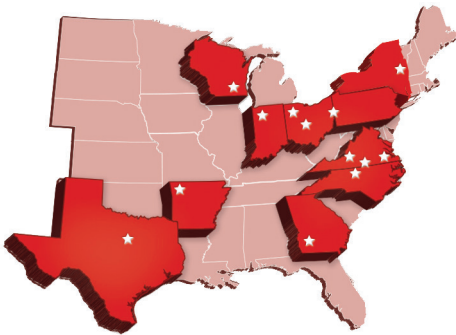
The company's new yard management system will provide Fleetmaster and its customers with real-time updates on trailers, containers and equipment; reporting of dwell time, trailer history and driver productivity; and scorecarding.

The system also will provide Fleetmaster and its customers with real-time instant information for both internal and external use via a Web interface. The company will include a tablet in every piece of equipment, which will have a real-time data connection that communicates as moves are happening.

"It is our ultimate goal to become more efficient so that we can pass more benefits along to our customers," said Brent Hopper, Fleetmaster's spotting division manager.

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changes we have in the works are a direct result of our drivers' hard work and dedication," Smith says. "They provide the best service possible to our customers, which makes these increases possible."

When recruiting new drivers, Fleetmaster touts that candidates can expect 100 percent no-touch loads, no hazmat freight, weekly settlements and quality home time. The company says it also provides drivers with a bonus plan incentive, including bonuses for driver referrals and clean U.S. Department of Transportation inspections. Other benefits include an array of medical, life and disability insurance program options.

Among Fleetmaster's more unique perks is its "Best of the Best" program that recognizes drivers who have exhibited exceptional performance. Posters celebrating their accomplishments are displayed at every terminal, and the drivers are awarded gifts in appreciation for a job well done.

Also, the company's "Praise for A's" program rewards employees' children for their hard work in school. The program pays children in grades K-12 every grading period for each "A" they make in core classes.

"Our drivers work hard and deserve any increases in pay or benefits we can provide," Smith says. "We appreciate their outstanding service and are happy to reward them wherever and however we can."

### **Technology talks**

Safety is another well-documented suc-

### **No empty seats**

Of course, investing in the latest top-of-the-line equipment doesn't do any good if there's no one sitting behind the steering wheel to get the load from point A to point B. That's why Fleetmaster also recently made big changes to its driver compensation and benefits packages.

"Our focus has always been getting our drivers the miles they want and to reward them for doing their job well," says Andy Kester, operations manager.

The company, which stresses its stability and commitment to drivers, recently increased its driver detention policy by 200 percent. Fleetmaster also increased its weekly employer-matched 401(k) program by 110 percent, and it also increased its paid holiday package by more than 300 percent.

In February, the company increased pay for all drivers, including a hike of more than 10 percent for all of its road drivers.

"These announcements and the other